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ABSTRACT

This book is an anthology of 45 stories, poems, and essays written by adult education (adult basic education and high school equivalency program) students in Ohio. The authors and their teachers were honored at the 1999 Ohio Writers' Conference. The authors were selected from 242 entries by a committee of faculty, staff, and adult students. The works are organized in sections with the following themes: family, hodgepodge, nature, reminiscences, and spiritual. A list of authors receiving honorable mention and an index of writers are included in the book. (KC)

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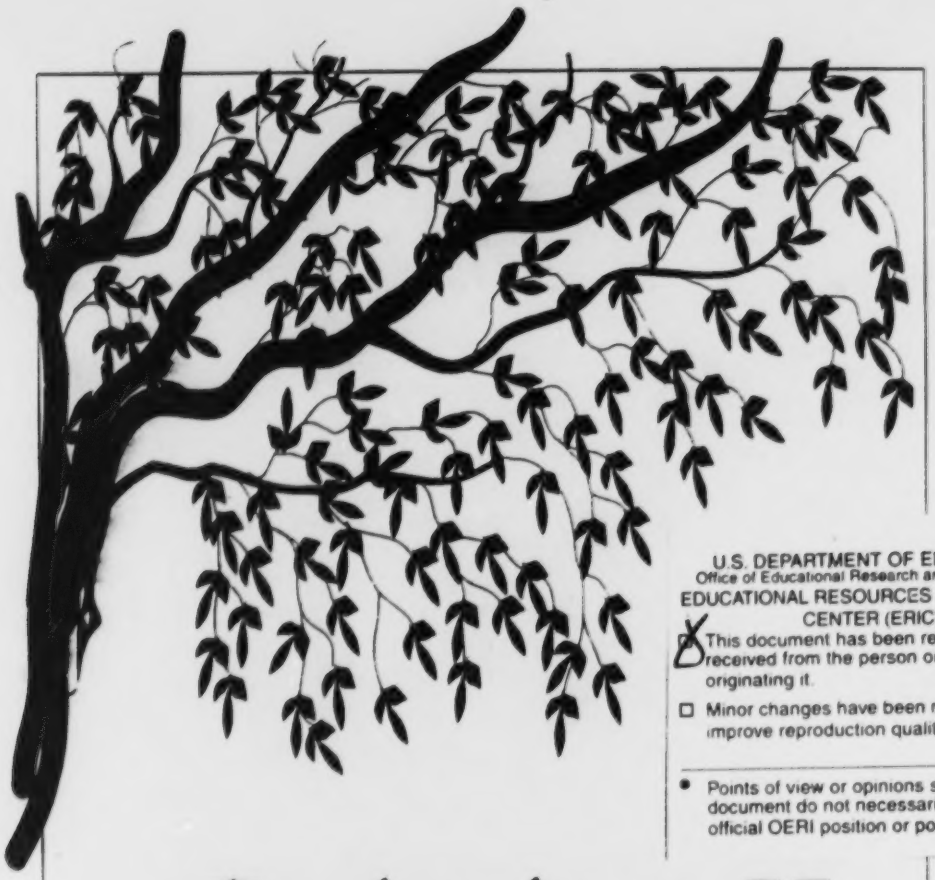

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Beginnings II

A publication of adult student writing of the

Ohio Writer's Conference

The Ohio Literacy Resource Center
April 23, 1999

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Foreword

Welcome to Beginnings II, an anthology of stories, poems, and essays written by adult education students in Ohio. The authors and their teachers were honored at the 1999 Ohio Writers' Conference.

This volume boasts a new color and a different binding but the same caliber of writing and level of interest as Beginnings. The 45 authors celebrated here were selected from 242 entries by a committee of faculty, staff, and adult students. We at the OLRC are delighted to present more authors and a few longer stories than last year.

No publication goes to press without the hard work of people behind the scenes. Jim Bowling, Assistant Director of Vocational and Adult Education in the Ohio Department of Education, continues to lend his personal enthusiasm and professional support to this project. We are grateful for the help of The Ohio Literacy Network (OLN) and the ABLE and family literacy teachers who encouraged and assisted students to submit their writing. Jean Stephens, Director of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center, committed the talents of the OLRC staff to the project. Without the vision and work of Nancy Padak, the faculty advisor to the OLRC, the publication of adult student writers would not have been realized.

Bryan Bardine deserves credit for organizing the entire Writers' Conference project and supervising the submission and selection process. Connie Sapin provided oversight of the project. Adult literacy students Norma King, Elizabeth K. Pierce, Tina Shawbell, and Karen Smith served as readers of submissions, making Beginnings II more student-oriented. Madelyn Thomas contributed the attractive formatting and Andrea Yates helped wherever she was needed.

Whether you are a student, a teacher, or an interested reader, you will find brief haiku poems and eerie mystery stories on themes such as family and celebrations. Enjoy your journey through Beginnings II.

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Family

From the Window

Look Mother it's dawn
No Mama's gone

I see her trying to take a peek.
She falls back because she is so very weak.

There's the children laughing and playing
As she lays here praying.

The cars whiz by
And all she did was sigh.

Here comes her mother and sister dear
She smiles and comes alive—they're here.

Now it's time for them to go to their homes.
The life is gone, the tears fall, and she moans.

The time grows near for my Mother Dear.
She knows it and she shows no fear.

Look Mother it's dawn
No Mama's gone

—Sandra J. Zile

He Was One of a Kind

My father-in-law Edward was one of a kind
not another one like him will you find.

Sweet, gentle, loving and kind,
that's how he was
that father-in-law of mine.

Once in a while he'd tell me a lie
and when I figured it out
we'd laugh till we cried.

Edward was such a very good man;
he was always there to lend a hand.

He never had a bad thing to say
about anyone who passed his way.

He loved his family with all of his heart;
that's why he whistled like a lark.

I only knew Edward for eight short years,
and everyday I held him more dear.

On April 20 of 94 our Heavenly Father opened his door,
and he told our sweet Edward, "You can do no more."

While you were here, you did your best;
now it's time to go home and rest.

Now Edward is sitting high on a cloud.
And I know we're all going to make him very proud.

I know you don't want me to shed a tear,
but I can't help it. You were such a dear.

We'll watch over Dorothy and try to ease her pain.
But without you around, nobody will be the same.

It broke my heart when you had to go,
but our Heavenly Father called you home.

You'll always be with me and on my mind
because, dear father-in-law,

YOU WERE ONE OF A KIND

—Mary L. Garrison

A Warm Embrace

She would hold me in her arms
With tender love and care.
She would wipe my tears with her soft hands.
She would run her fingers through my hair.
And when I was little,
She would tie my shoes.
She taught me well.
I learned so very much from her.
She taught me how to love the Lord.
She taught me how to enjoy the Lord's beauty.
And then through the years,
She became my best friend.
Not only did she teach me,
She took me in her loving home,
With open arms.
She would heal my hurts.
She would laugh with me.
She would give me advice
She would tell me stories of the broken past,
Even though it hurt her to tell.
When I felt like I would fall,
She would stretch out her arms and catch me.
Then, when I thought it was the end,
She would always manage to find a new beginning
The most amazing thing she taught me
in all my life was music.
She taught me about Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven.
She taught me how to sing.
She believed in me and my dreams.
She always said that there was no star too far to reach for.
She is a wonderful woman.
I feel so blessed and honored to know her.
She is my Grandma. . . .

—Courtney E. Manning

Courage

Courage is facing reality. Reality is in the mind's eye; the sum of all the events around us. It's continually moving forward in life willing to face death for our country, family, and beliefs. Facing death is imminent and always with us. It brings loneliness, fear, and despair. We must never falter, but rather strive to conquer.

A good example of courage is my great grandfather, Lieutenant/Captain James G. Stephens. The Stephens had been granted a plot of land in the wilderness of Tennessee as payment for services rendered during the Revolutionary War. James G.'s grandfather had answered the call of liberty and now it called again, as before, pitting brother against brother.

Times and life were hard in Scott County, Tennessee. The area was isolated, and local people banded together to bring law and order to the wilderness. These brave souls took care of themselves and cared for their own needs with little surplus to barter trade from outside the mountainous area. Odds were a man would live and die within twenty miles of his birthplace. The only recompense was liberty—the God-given right to choose one's own fate.

After a long and heated debate, the States voted to create a central government. It was decided that this Federal government would address only the issues concerning the common defense of everyone and insure that trade was kept free and equal between the States. As James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and others had stated, local government would be empowered to take care of local needs. This was the very foundation of liberty and what grandfather had given everything to fight for.

Now in the early 1860's the fair lady known as Liberty was being raped and pillaged by the northern moneylenders and industrialists. History, as always, would soon be tinted to reflect the winner's point of view. But for now free men still had a chance. A new amendment to the Constitution had been set forth and would soon be approved. At this time it was

known as the Fourteenth Amendment. It prohibited anyone holding the title of Esquire from holding any government office. Those holding this title were lawyers and bankers. In addition, the Fourteenth Amendment prohibited judges from being called "your honor" (because all men are equal and none are to be honored above another) and set forth strict guidelines on how the Federal government could raise monies and to whom they could become indebted.

Freedom meant that a man could become indebted by his own free choice and no one had the right to bind another to the yoke of indebtedness. This Fourteenth Amendment was an affirmation of that ideal and left no room for the maneuverings of the moneylenders and industrialists. Knowing that no one would support the Southern cause against freedom (as shown by the Fourteenth Amendment's creation and adoption) alternate issues supporting an expanded Federal role were played upon and propagated upon the people.

Of the 3,319 souls in Scott County, Tennessee, only 23 joined with the Confederate forces to fight the insidious evil from the North. James G. went against the advice of friends and peers to fight as his grandfather had for the cause of liberty. He firmly believed that States should be left to govern and take care of their own needs. James G. was an educated man and knew that real issues were being disguised behind the issue of slavery, but slavery meant little to the residents of Scott County where the economy was not dependant upon this labor pool. What was important was the right for all men to be treated as equals and the right to remain free of indebtedness to causes they and their local fellows didn't support.

Leaving his friends and family to fight an unpopular fight on the largely unsupported side was only the beginning of his test of courage. On the frontier men and sons were a necessity for survival and James G. had seemingly left everyone behind to fend for themselves.

The grandeur associated with fighting for ideals and glory of war was lost in the first battle with the grim reality of the smell of stinking blood, the screams of the dying, and the

emptied bowels of the dead. Reality was your opponent's blood sprayed across your hands and face as the bayonet stole the wind from his dying screams. War held no glory, only the putrid stench of death and the certain knowledge that death was always but a moment away.

General Lee marched them north for 200 grueling miles. Two hundred miles walking without shoes and little in the way of food in the wet and cold of the mountains. To steal food or clothes from anyone meant certain hanging. General Lee would not allow such uncivilized behavior in this army. When they finally came upon Harper's Ferry and won the day, all felt the need to rid themselves of the uncleanliness that battle brought with it and to grieve for friends lost and maimed. But the day held no rest for them. General Lee had split his forces to strike Harper's Ferry and the Union Commanders, sensing his vulnerability, charged head on to engage the General with an overwhelming force. With the afternoon the long retreat began, fleeing from the vast hordes released by the Union commanders. As evening fell, James G. was assigned along with a few other brave souls to delay the Union forces on South Mountain. James G. knew this was his day to die. He was willing to spill his own blood to buy time for the General and his army to ford the river and have some chance for survival. While he and his comrades waited without hope for their certain death, God did come for James G. that night. James G. and his comrades fought for eight long hours moving from rock to rock fighting with knives and clubs or any weapon which availed itself, for they had no supplies. Everyone knew they were the walking dead. For eight long hours they more than held, they survived, joining up with General Lee again several days later. Through courage, an unbending will to follow what he knew to be right and the grace of God, he'd come back to a cold meal and hot fire he'd thought never to see again. He'd lived to fight another day.

In less than a week, James G. would again be tested at Sharpsburg in the Battle of Antietam Creek, which is still the bloodiest day in American history. James G. was placed in a small wooded copse next to the infamous cornfield. James G.

was one of nine surviving Lieutenants of the 34 deployed.

James G. was eventually wounded, captured, and sent to the dreaded prison on Lake Erie for officers and political prisoners. After the war he was released on his oath of allegiance and taken to Richmond, Virginia, where he was set afoot to walk home.

Once home, he continued to fulfill his ideals. Through honor, courage, and commitment, James G. served many years as Justice of the Peace, lawyer, and prosecuting attorney with distinction. He raised his family to be committed to these same values (as demonstrated by two of his sons: Andrew Jackson, his fourth son, served for many years as Sheriff and Coroner. His fourteenth son, James, fought side by side with soon-to-be President Theodore Roosevelt in the Battle for San Juan Hill.)

James G.'s ideals of honor, courage, and commitment to God, Home, and Country are indeed rare, especially when you consider that this man devoted the rest of his life to public service. The Fourteenth Amendment would be ratified by the necessary majority by 1865 only to be lost amidst the scandalous turmoil and corruption following the war. An ordinary man may have given into despair, but James G. passed his values to his descendants and ever will they be remembered as men who left their footprints in history.

—Anna Khulenberg

I Remember

I remember the day you were born,
So innocent and sweet.
It was only fate that we should meet.
God gave me a gift, a prize.
That's how I felt when I looked into your eyes.

You're growing so fast.
Oh, how I wish it would last.
When you needed to be cuddled and loved,
I wouldn't have traded that for the stars above!

You needed me so much then.
Now you're determined, ready for life to begin.
No one could love you more.
I want you to fulfill your dreams and soar.
I will always be thankful for you.
You were meant for me before I knew.

Your life will always be a ray of sun,
And my heart will remember
And cherish when we were one.

—Regina Mulkey

Grandpa's Gift

On Christmas night my husband's family always gathered at his grandpa's house. With his six children and their spouses, eighteen grandchildren and spouses, twenty-seven great grandchildren, and eight great-great-grandchildren there was always a house full.

After gathering at Grandpa's, we would always feast on all the food we had prepared. Grandpa always made the ham and the homemade bread. The rest of the family would bring the rest of the food.

After eating, it would be time to open presents. The little kids would be so excited to open presents from Grandpa. All the grandchildren thirteen and older would receive a little package to be opened. We always knew what it was, but we pretended to be surprised.

All throughout the year, Grandpa would save up his change, and his two daughters (Janet and Mary) would roll it. They would then take the rolls to the bank and trade them for brand new ten-dollar bills. Then they would wrap these bills in little boxes.

Grandpa would always ask us what we planned to spend our money on. We would always tell him our plans. We had so many things we planned to buy with our ten dollars. Grandpa always laughed and smiled, as we told him all of our dreams for the money.

Grandpa died last January and could not be with us this year. But we still got together. We brought lots of food, lots of love, and lots of memories. I know Grandpa was with us in spirit, watching over us with a Christmas blessing.

—Wendy Wion

Differences

My two girls, Tikasha and Mary, are somewhat different. Tikasha is 4. She is very quiet and shy; she likes to watch TV and play with toys like dolls, blocks, and playing dress up. She goes to bed really late. She does what I ask her to do. Tikasha doesn't like to hug and kiss all the time.

On the other hand, Mary, who is 3, is not quiet; she likes to be heard. She is bossy, hardheaded, and can be a bully. She likes to dress like a boy and play with cars and trucks. She is just like her father. She goes to bed on time, but she has to be told a few times before she does what I ask of her. She can be very lovable and likes to give lots of hugs and kisses.

They are my girls, and I love them both the same and just the way they are.

—Joanne Turner

Granddaughter

Granddaughter, Granddaughter I miss you. Will I ever see you again?
I miss your big blue eyes and your long brown flowing hair.
I miss the library trips when you'd give me lip for three books weren't enough to check out. You wanted fifty.
Reading to you and braiding your hair always brought me great joy.
It's been four years since I saw you last.
Now you are a big girl of seven and I bet you're just as pretty as your mother.
I still remember the day your dad took you away and the pain I felt.
Big tears rolled down your cheeks as they carried you down the walk way.
The words you spoke still ring in my ears as if it were yesterday.
"Grandma, save me, Grandma." There was nothing I could do.
I sat on my stoop and began to cry and a memory came to me.
Remembering when you, your brother, and I played school. I'd pretend I didn't understand or know words, numbers and colors.
This particular day I remember I asked "What's this color and this word? Who knows what comes after number ten, and what letter comes after M. You have to help me. I don't remember."
Your brother turned to me and asked this question.
"Grandma how do you drive a car?"
If you can't remember, the color is purple.
The word is house.
The number after ten is eleven and the letter after M is N.
You, granddaughter dear, turned to me and placed your tiny hands on my cheeks and squeezed them together.
Asking me, "Yea, Grandma, what's wrong with you?"

For that I had no answer, but I did know your brother was
getting wise.
It made me smile then made me sad to know
That I would no longer have the opportunity to have more
cherished memories in the future.

—*Juanita Lindgren*

What is a Baby?

Some people think a baby means a lot of hard work.
They think about the messy diapers, the stinking bottles,
crying and dirty clothes.
They also think about all of the attention they need to give
this child,
And all the money they're going to have to spend.

Then other people think about the good stuff that comes
with a baby,
Like the first time you hold that precious baby in your arms.
They look up into your eyes and wonder.
You feel happy, excited, and worried at the same time.
The first time they smile at you, you just smile back and
feel so good.
Their first tooth, you were so proud, after all the crying
from pain
That precious baby went through.
The first time your baby sat up by himself, crawled, walked,
Said his first word, "Mama, Dada," you were just so proud.
These people think of the love that they are going to share
with this little person
They just brought into the world.

—*Misty Williams*

Bon Homme

He was ethnic Irish, or so the rolling accent of our Canadian relations seemed to indicate. He came from a remote town named "Sheen" in the Ottawa River valley, where kissing cousins denoted "you might be a Quebecois if. . . ."

Leaving the farm by sixteen, he drifted from Val d'Or, to Goose Bay, to Prince Rupert, to Galveston, to Cleveland. He stayed with an older brother; it was here he met my mother, married, and settled down to eventually raise two sons.

Now in the course of normal maturation in America of the 50's and 60's, a father would teach his sons to drive. My dad was, however, not Robert Young or Ozzie Nelson. Never having owned a car until his thirties, he was more comfortable with horses, and perhaps partially for this reason, he made everyone who ever rode with him uncomfortable. This, then, is a true story of how my dad made me the driver that I am today.

The family station wagon was a huge Chevy with a stick shift. It was even more huge when you were seven and your dad sat you behind the wheel. I'd steer and pretend I was driving while the car was safely shut off in the garage. Though too small to reach the pedals, I'd listen to Dad tell me about the clutch, brake, gas . . .

One day Dad took me along on some errands in the next town. I felt like a big deal in that behemoth of a car and was surprised when Dad parked on a hill beside a shoe store.

"I will only be gone a bit, eh? Be a good lad and we'll see about getting ya some skates. It's time I taught ya to skate like Rocket Richard! Back in three shakes of a lamb's tail!"

As he walked towards the store, I tried to imagine who Maurice "Rocket" Richard of the Montreal Canadians was like. Davy Crockett, Zorro, Captain Penny, and Ed Sullivan were all accessible role models thanks to TV. The Rocket and "National Hockey Night" was a mystery south of Lake Erie.

I grew restless. The eternity (5 or 10 minutes) of waiting prompted me to think of something to do. I decided to play Roy Rogers, and since Trigger was unavailable at the time,

I'd pretend to drive "Nellie Bell" the Jeep. I jumped into the driver's seat and tugged at the wheel in mad pursuit of the "bad guys." Glancing down at the pedals, I thought I'd give "Nellie" the gas. As I strained to reach, I slid on the vinyl seat and landed with both feet on the clutch, while at the same time pulling the wheel hard to the left.

"Whoa Nellie!" Heading down the hill, I couldn't see over the dash where I was headed. Certain I was going to die, I ducked to the floor too stunned to make a sound and prepared to meet Jesus and the Holy Ghost. While on the floor, I heard a grinding noise, then a click as the car mysteriously stopped. At the time I didn't comprehend that getting off the clutch and not a guest appearance by the Virgin Mary stopped the car. Climbing up on the seat, I was able to see that while I didn't hit anything, I was sitting on the middle of the hill sideways.

Dad was going to kill me, I was sure. I made myself small on the side of the seat where I was supposed to have been. He'd be like great bear or a devil, eh? Click! went the driver's door.

"So ya'd be leavin' without yer dear old father, eh?" He wasn't screaming. It was a good sign.

"No Dad, I'm sorry Dad, please don't tell Mom!"

Some years later, as I was now a teen, Dad decided to give me another shot. We were at a campground with a lot of dirt roads and not very much traffic. It was the age of Dad's pink Rambler Classic three speed. He had acquired it as a used car to save gas to and from his ironwork jobs. While it was easy on gas, it jerked going in gear and shook like magic fingers in a cheap motel bed up over 50 mph. Dad never seemed to notice the increase in our bouts with carsickness, boasting "it's a fine wee car!"

Little brother and I could not understand why he didn't have a cool car like Uncle Joe's Buick Wildcat: fire engine red, ragtop, white leather interior, four on the floor, etc. I was sure if I had a car such as this (along with some shades), I could impress the chicks and make the guys just stand back and say "damn."

As we readied to embark on this voyage, I glanced at Little Brother. He was delighted to be going along with me and was singing the theme from "The Monkees." He stuffed his pudgy frame in the back of the two door pink car, smiling at the prospect of high adventure.

Now if Little Brother was mildly apprehensive of his sometimes mean older brother, he was genuinely terrified of our Dad, or "Your Father" as he always tagged him. He had adequate grounds, for at 5'11" and 190 (even at 50), Dad looked more like an enforcer for the Gambino family than a PTA alum. Add to all this, dark ominous eyes, a sunburned bald head, arms the size of most men's legs, and a hockey-stick-broke nose the size of a casaba melon. You had the Devil Incarnate. No wonder "Baby Dumplin" as Dad dubbed him had trepidations.

Dad got in the passenger seat, as I climbed behind the wheel. Pushing in the clutch, I hit the starter.

"Don't be grindin' coffee now, this is a fine car, not the A&P eh?" Dad admonished.

We were off! I drove over the dam of the lake we were camped by.

"Don't be weavin' now, ya put me wee car in the lake and the Coast Guard'll have to retrieve it!" Dad spoke as I began to ignore him and concentrate on driving and daydreaming.

Cruising along, I imagined myself not in a pink Rambler with my next of kin, but in a red GTO with Ursula Andress and Cat Woman drawing straws as to who would have their way with me. My fantasy tigress de jour hesitated as I turned down a steep hill.

"Watch out for those holes!" Bam! went the pink car, as it went in almost to the axle!

"Sweet Roarin' Jesus, you've wrecked me car!" Dad was shrieking at me in a high decibel voice half an octave higher than normal. He was also choking me with both hands, causing us to weave as we descended in whichever direction my head was being shaken. We stopped at the bottom of the hill when I hit the brake and stalled the car. The car stopped. Dad stopped. I had lived to see Ed Sullivan another night.

From the back seat came an unholy noise like Yoko Ono being pleasured by a herd of banshees. Little Brother was sobbing, screaming, and calling for Mommy, the Army, Navy, Air Force, or anyone at all that would let him out and save him from these two psychotic fiends in the front seat.

Somehow I restarted the car and managed to get it back to the campsite under the malevolent gaze of Dad. We parked, got out, and I watched as Little Brother shot into the trailer like a frightened deer. I then had to help Dad crawl underneath the evil pink car for a lengthy damage assessment.

When we emerged from beneath the bowels of the Rambler, we were faced with certain death, for there stood Mom with my brother behind her. He had dry eyes, newly dry pants, and a smirk on his face. She had a scowl and a look in her pale blue eyes like two phasers on stun.

I felt as if she would bore holes through us with her stare when she spoke: "I honestly don't know what's wrong with you two idiots, but you (Dad) are not to take him driving again, and you, young man, are not to drive until you take driver's ed at school!" She took L.B. back to the trailer and went inside.

The world had come to an end! How was I ever to get a car and learn to drive? How was I to become a playboy and all around international babe magnet?

"Ah, the dear girl's full of malarkey! Let's be jolly now, and walk down to the lake and go fishing!" Dad shot me a big grin after he said this, and I realized things would be OK after all, because as they said in Quebec, he was a Bon Homme.

—Ken Tallon

Bear

A sad experience happened to me last year. My dog named Bear was shot. I don't know why, but when I found out, I felt like someone had ripped my heart out. So I fell to my knees, and asked the good Lord, "Why?" I waited for a response, but there was no answer.

I stayed on my knees and started to think about us. I remembered how his ears would stand up and his tail would start to wag. I would sit down beside him, and he would put his paw up to shake hands like a friend would. Bear's coat was the most beautiful mixture of black and brown. I would run my fingers through his thick coat, and he would look at me with his eyes full of love.

He was the most intelligent dog I knew. He could look at me with those big, brown, puppy eyes, and I knew that something was wrong. Then he would start to fix the problem with his love and affection by rubbing up against me, putting his head on my knee, and looking up at me. I'm going to miss all of that. Now I know what it feels like to lose a best friend.

—Kenny Butcher Jr.

Just Matthew

He's just Matthew. He's one person.
Not made of steel or iron. Made of everything we are.
He enjoys the simple things in life, such as
Taking a walk on a nice day, or laying on
A blanket on the grass looking at the stars
On a beautiful night with his best friend, while talking.
He loves nature.
Sitting on a rocky surface and looking out into
The trees, the sky, the clouds and the sun.
He's just Matthew.
He found the meaning of life and enjoys it.
He appreciates family.
He loves to learn about a lot of different religions.
His favorites are following the path of life and Astrology.
He always says, "You are your own best friend."
He enjoys the company of others, but also loves to be alone.
He's just Matthew.
Very easy to please.
He loves to ride the wind on his "78" Harley Davidson
Low Rider
He admires dolphins.
One of his dreams is to swim with one.
He's just Matthew.
Sweet, Sentimental, Caring, Kind.
He's just Matthew.
A very special person to know.
And it's even better when he's your best friend.

—Shannon Neal

Your New Baby

CONGRATULATIONS
Hip-Hip-Hooray! Your beautiful baby is on the way.

A boy or girl we know not which,
But we'll learn a little more when they start taking the pics.

Bubbly, happy and full of joy,
Have you already started buying the toys?

It won't be long til your lives will change.
Nothing will ever be the same.

Your lives will be happier and lots more fun
When your little one finally comes.

God is sending you his greatest gift.
Just wait until you feel the lift.

You'll touch the clouds and reach the sky.
You'll be so happy you'll want to cry.

Congratulations.

—Mary L. Garrison

A Grandmother's Reward

"Nana, what was it like when you were a little girl? Was it a real long time ago? How long ago?" So many questions from one small boy, my dear grandson age seven.

So, I decided to answer as many questions as I could, for how else does a child learn? I began. "Yes," I said, "it was a long time ago. Close to seventy years." "Wow," he said. The more I talked, the more questions he asked. "What did you watch on television?"

"It wasn't invented yet," I replied. And so it went. I told him how we lived far from town. "We had no electricity in the house, so we used oil lamps and candles for light. We had to be very careful with them and keep them very clean so we didn't start a fire. Our water came from a well so that you used a pump to fill your water pails. A pump was a very funny looking iron thing with a long handle for pumping up and down. This made the water come down the little spout on the front and into our pails. It was the coolest, most refreshing water you ever tasted."

"Oh, Nana! how cool," he said. "I sure would like to see one of those pumps!"

"Well, you can indeed see one," I told him. "They still use them on many country farms, especially in Amish country, and we can go to the library and take out books."

Then came the big question. The one I was hoping he wouldn't think of, but did. "Nana, if you didn't have water in the house, how did you use the bathroom?" How to explain the little house out back to a little boy who had never seen one?

"Well, it was like this," I said. "We had a small building outside, in the back yard, quite a ways from the house. It sat among some evergreens and inside were two seats. One for the children and one for the grown ups. Some people called them outhouses but we called ours Biffy. We thought that sounded much nicer. It was painted white and it was always kept very clean." Needless to say, my grandson was fascinated by this phenomenon.

"Did you have toys, Nana, and did you play outside like we do, and how about a bike?" "Wait a minute, one question at a time," I replied. "We had some toys, not as many as you have. We had skates, not like today's skates. We just clamped them on our shoes and kept them tight with a skate key that we wore around our necks. We had checkers and Monopoly, and the whole family played. In the summer we played outside until dark, catching fireflies and playing hide and seek. It was so much fun. I guess that is why we call them 'the good old days.'"

He still had more questions. I told him we would save them for another time, and I would tell him everything he wanted to know. "OK, Nana," he said, "but don't leave anything out."

"Don't worry," I replied, "I won't."

It was so much fun to share these things with my grandson. To me they are memories; to him they are history. I consider it a privilege to share history with him. To see the light of shining interest in his eager eyes is, indeed, a grandmother's greatest reward.

—Marlyn Lucrezi

Tail

I am not a dog.
A three year old boy am I.
My Daddy says I'm a dog.
Mommie says I look cute.
Daddy says cut it off.
Mommie says not.
They argue back and forth.
Cut, Cute, Cut, Cute.
Snip, Flush.
Now they can argue over the bald spot in the
back of my head.

—Juanita J. Lindgren

Name

Husband, Dear, of twenty four years.
Do you know my name?
Where's my Where's my
Is not my given name.

—Juanita J. Lindgren

My Two Children

I see many differences between my two boys Jeffrey, who is five, and Bryan, who is four.

They like different TV shows. Jeffrey is more into dinosaurs and "Nature." Bryan likes "Blue's Clues" and "Sesame Street."

Jeffrey is more independent. He can run his own bath water, even though I'm in the room with him. But Bryan gets all silly and goofy and needs more help.

Jeffrey can comprehend more than Bryan. He knows when something is dangerous. He can warn Bryan.

They both can understand things, but Bryan needs a little more help because he's younger.

—Tara Rhinehart

What is a Parent?

Parents love you with all their heart
no matter what you say or do.

Good or bad, right or wrong
they're right there with you all along.

They instill you with values, then hope and pray that they
will always with you stay.

Parents will give you all that they can
to help you grow to be a man.

They want to make you happy and give you all that you need
even if they have to do without
But that's OK, 'cause that's what their love is all about.

Parents are fallible and not always right
But they love you, little man
And they're just doing the best that they can.

As time goes by and they start to turn gray,
you'll be old enough to go your own way.

It will break their hearts when you decide to go,
but they'd never dream of telling you no.

Always remember, once you leave home
their love goes with you where ever you roam.

So, what is a parent?

A parent is the most precious gift that God can give a child.
And Anthony, God has given you the very best!

—Mary L. Garrison

Hands Are Precious

Hands are for grasping and holding onto things. The way you held my finger when I rocked and sang you to sleep or the way you held my hand to cross the street.

As you grow and learn your hands will reach down and tie or buckle your shoes, reach up to zip or button your coat, a little farther up to comb your hair.

Hands are precious things to have.

—Anna Khulenberg

Someday

He stands so straight and tall,
holding his wife who is so small.
He loves her, she loves him,
over fifty years married they have been.
He holds and steadies her shaking hand
and says someday we are going to a better land.
They have lived a very good life,
praying through their times of strife.
Knowing that someday everything
would turn out to be all right.
Someday her hand won't shake anymore
when they cross over to the other shore.

—Norma King

Grandfather

One of the most influential people in my life was my grandfather. My grandfather lived on a large, beautiful farm near Attica, Ohio. During summer vacations, my brother and I would stay with them for about six weeks to help with the farm work.

Although Grandfather had a large farm, his primary occupation was cabinet builder. He built custom kitchen and bathroom cabinets, stairways, and did trim work for some of the finest homes in the area. He was a perfectionist in his cabinet making, and this trait was carried over into everything he did.

On his farm, the house, the barn, and the white board fence that surrounded the farm were always painted and in good repair. The corn was always planted in perfectly straight rows, and the hay was always stacked in neat rows inside the barn.

This quest for perfection, which he tried to instill in his grandsons, wasn't always appreciated by my brother and me.

One hot, summer day, we were spreading crushed stone on the floor inside a tool shed. Grandfather was down on his hands and knees sighting across the floor, directing us to throw more stone in the low spots and to rake down the high spots. After about 2 hours of shoveling, raking, and sweating, I said, "I think this floor is level enough for a tool shed," which started a 20-minute lecture on how, "If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing right." After another hour of shoveling and raking, he was finally satisfied with the floor.

As teenage boys, we were only interested in getting the job done as quickly as possible, so we could get on with what we considered the really important things in life, like swimming, or hanging out in town with our friends Grandpa would take the time, and he had the patience, to show us how to do the job properly.

Grandpa also collected and restored antique furniture and clocks. His house was filled with wonderful examples of

antique chairs, tables, and stands of solid walnut and cherry wood. Many had marble tops and elaborate carvings and inlays. His special passion was his collection of over 300 antique clocks. There was a room upstairs lined from floor to ceiling with shelves, filled with clocks restored to perfection, of course.

My grandparents' house was the family gathering place for Sunday dinners and holidays. One Christmas, my brother and I thought it would be fun to wind up a bunch of clocks before dinner and set them to strike 12 o'clock all at once. We snuck up to the clock room and wound up about 100 clocks. As we sat down for Christmas dinner and just after the blessing was said, "all hell broke loose" upstairs! The clanging and banging of 100 clocks all going off at once caused enough noise and commotion to raise the dead. My brother and I were laughing and red in the face. We thought it all very funny, My mother, however, didn't think it was so funny. As punishment, my brother and I had to wash and dry all the pots, pans, and dishes after dinner.

Secretly though, I think Grandpa got a big kick out if it.

My grandparents were generous almost to a fault. Their farm was located along State Route 224, a major east-west route through the state before the construction of interstate highways. It was a lucky motorist who broke down near their house. Many times during the summer, we would assist stranded motorists.

Grandpa would help them change flat tires, or give them gas from his storage tank, or call for help if they had a major breakdown. Almost everyone would get a tour of the farm and be taken into the house to wash their hands and get a drink. Grandpa would show them his clock collection, and while he was giving a tour, Grandmother would be preparing them a meal. Almost no one got away from the farm without being fed first. They would "break down" as strangers, but leave "well fed" as friends. At Christmas my grandparents would receive cards from all over the country and often people would stop

with homemade pies, cakes, and bread for the nice people who treated them with such kindness when their cars had left them stranded.

I'm thankful for the work ethic my Grandfather instilled in me, the pride I feel when I've done a job well, and for the fortitude to stick with it until the job is done right.

The appreciation I have for fine antiques and the enjoyment I get from restoring old cars probably started with Grandpa's furniture and clocks. I can only hope that I've inherited some of his generous nature and love of people.

My Grandfather has long since passed away, and the farm has been sold. The new owners haven't kept the farm up, and it saddens me to drive past the old place and see it deteriorating. When I drive by the old place, that old tool shed catches my eye, and I can't help thinking, that old shed has a stone floor in it that's level enough to play billiards on.

—Bob Evans

Hodgepodge

A Man Who is Without

A man without a conscience is like a man without a soul, and he doesn't care who he uses.

A man without compassion is like a man without a heart, and he doesn't care who he hurts.

A man who is thoughtless is like a man without any feelings, and he doesn't even know how to love.

A man who is a dreamer is like a man without any real identity, and he'll never be content with what he has.

A man who is a drifter is like a man without a home, and he'll never trust anyone as long as he keeps running.

A man who is not open and honest is like a man without any truthfulness; you can never believe anything he says.

—*Karen Smith*

The Year of Our Lord 2000

I heard a storm is comin'.
Like all the others they gave it a name.
It'll cause an economy crisis they claim.
Y2K is its name.

The optimist thinks it is a cinch.
Our world is too smart for such a glitch.
While pessimists store all they get,
And the naive think it's a myth.

The government has no power over it.
The world will not escape it.
We certainly cannot ignore it.
And financially, will you trust it?

Being undecided is not wise.
Make up your mind in ninety nine.
Being prepared will give you peace of mind
When the year 2000 comes.

—Annie Bell

Life is Not All Roses

Sometimes I feel strange that I speak English, write essays in English, and especially I am always eager to improve my English skills. I feel like this because I hated to study English when I was a student.

I had to take English classes for six years in junior high school and high school, but I hated all of these English requirements. Therefore, I was always discontent that I had to read and write English, because I was Japanese, lived in Japan, had no friends who spoke English, did not like to study English, and believed strongly that I did not need English skills. Of course my English test scores and records were always dreadful. As I did not like English, I always studied it unwillingly. I could not get a good score on my English test so I came to dislike English more and more. It was a vicious cycle. Furthermore, if I had a chance to choose English or another subject, I always chose the other one. I always searched for ways to avoid all kinds of English matters.

In addition, at the university I had to take English classes for two years and I sometimes had to read English theses and write abstracts of my theses in English. I usually could not finish without friends' help to do my homework and reports. This was really unpleasant for me.

Unfortunately my boyfriend got a job in the U.S. and moved to the U.S. I married the boyfriend after all, and I also moved to the U.S. I could not say that I did not like English, and I did not want to study English any longer. If I avoided English, it was impossible for me to live here because I could not do anything by myself.

In spite of this situation, I still did not like to study English, so I unwillingly took some English as a Second Language classes at first. After almost one year had passed, I started to study English positively. I started to understand American culture and characteristics. Little by little I started thinking that I would like to communicate more fluently with people who lived around here.

I had a lot of disagreeable experiences here because I could not convey what I wanted to say or I could not understand what people said. It may be so, but I had met a lot of nice people here. I wanted to talk with them but I could not communicate well, so I always felt impatient with my English skills. Therefore, I started to think that I needed to improve my English skills much more. I did not feel unpleasant about English now, since I knew that English was not a subject in school, but the way of communication.

Now I enjoy taking some English classes here. Of course I found them by myself and I go to classes positively. However, as I did not study much when I was a student, my English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are very poor. Sometimes I am anxious about whether I will be able to use English fluently someday because I know that I have to study so many things. I often think if I had studied English hard when I was a student, I would not feel miserable now.

I always feel deeply in my heart that the reason I have to study English hard now is that I did not study English hard before. In life, I believe I should not always choose the easy way. Even though I can choose so for a little while, I will spend a hard time later. Life is not all roses.

—Yuki Ohashi

A Man of His Word Died Today

John Freeman Stephens was shot and killed October 5, 1905 for being a man of his word, according to court records.

John was a young man of thirty-three years, one of fifteen children, married with five girls of his own. He was well known by all the town's people as being a man of his word. If John said he would do it, he did it. John's employer once said, "John can shoe a horse better and faster than any man I've seen. He is honest and a man of his word." John was a very aggressive young man and some were afraid of him. John never picked fights, but he never turned his back on one either.

The night before the killing, John and his friend Henry met with some other friends to play cards. Following the game John and Henry argued outside Henry's home. John said, "Henry, you cheated in there and you know how I hate cheaters. Now you are going to pay." Pulling his pistol, John began shooting around Henry's feet making him dance. When his gun was empty, he looked at Henry and said, "I thought I knew you better. I'm really surprised at you!" John then turned and walked away.

It was the next morning and the circus was in town. John and his family dressed and set out on foot for the circus at Pine Grove. On the way they met Henry and his family. Henry was carrying his baby daughter in his arms and beneath the infant's long dress, he carried a loaded gun. As John walked up to Henry, John said, "Morning, sport." John's wife screamed. John turned, and Henry's bullet hit John in the back. John lived just long enough to look at Henry and say, "My God, Henry, why?"

After the killing, several stories circulated. John's brother-in-law said it was the most senseless shooting he had ever heard of. A cousin said it was over a dog fight in which Henry's dog was killed. John's daughter said it was over the card game. Another cousin said it was John's wife's fault for screaming—John turned and Henry thought that John was going for his gun, then shot from beneath the infant's dress.

Court records say that Henry's testimony was that he feared for his life. Henry testified that a friend had told him that on the night of the card game, John vowed to kill him before another sunset. Henry believed the friend and feared for his life. Henry pleaded self-defense. He was found innocent of murder, but guilty of carrying arms.

—Anna Khulenberg

An ABLE Student's List of Things I Hate

I hate not having my GED by now.
I hate that I cannot help my kids with homework.
I hate thinking I may be here next year.
I hate the way I treat my step-kids. I hate the way my step-kids treat me.
I hate all the fighting that is going on in the world.
I hate trying to get the wrapper off a CD.
I hate greens and chitterlings.
I hate when you tell people you'll call them back and they call you back.
I hate sitting at the dinner table and someone smacks.
I hate pointless math besides addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and percentages.
I hate poverty.
I hate sickness.
I hate when my kids look me in the face and tell me a lie I know is a lie.
I hate people that behave like they are better than I am.
I hate people that cut in front of me when I am driving.
I hate it when the cashier at a grocery store waits to close her line right when I am about to check out.
I hate getting up early in the morning.
I hate what drugs are doing to our people.
I hate exercising and never losing weight.
I hate hearing people bash Cleveland.
I hate when you are talking in a group about other people; then when you leave the group they talk about you.
I hate when children always ask the parent they know will most likely say yes.
I hate when teachers focus on the student who seems to give all the answers.
I hate when people blow their nose at the table.
I hate when people are smoking and blow the smoke on you.
I hate pulling weeds and having the stem break off.

I hate when the phone rings, you answer, and the person hangs up.
I hate when people stare at you.
I hate talking to boring people.
I hate when people think they know more than you.
I hate bill collectors.
I hate when someone says "See you in a minute," knowing they're not going to see you for another 5 hours or so.
I hate the saying "fast food" because it is not fast.
I hate having no money to pay the bills.
I hate standing in long lines at the grocery store.
I hate when it's dark and I'm trying to find the light and hit my head.
I hate that I didn't finish high school.

—Taylor ABLE/GED Class

It's Easy

"What is your last name?" the young man at the bakery counter asked me. I ordered the special bread there.

"My name is Matsunami," I answered.

"Give me the spelling, ma'am."

"M-A-T-S-U-N-A-M-I."

"M-A-P-S-U . . . ?"

He was confused with my Japanese accent.

"M like Marly, A, T like Tom, S, U, N like Nancy . . . ." I tried to continue my long spelling.

"Oh, wait a minute, how about your first name?" he asked.

My first name is Chizuru, but I thought if I said my first name it would make him more confused and he would ask me to spell it again, give up and finally I would not get the bread. I didn't want such a situation.

"My first name is . . . Chris." I tried to whisper my American name which I have never used since I got it.

"Is it C-H-R-I-S?" he asked me at once.

"Yes, it is."

"It's easy!"

I couldn't forget his big smile. Since that moment I became "Chris" and now I like this name. It's very convenient for everyone, every time, and everywhere.

I, "Chris," study to improve my English among American students. I am hoping that someday I can speak more fluently and say "it's easy."

—Chris Matsunami

A Good Leader

There are several things a good leader must possess. A good leader must be able to set examples, control varying situations, and be a good communicator. Through these characteristics a good leader will be an effective role model in people's lives.

By setting good examples, a leader will help others to realize that the decisions they make themselves are the right decisions. For an example, a person who decides not to drink and drive is directly setting an example for others to follow. A good leader must be able to choose right from wrong and must influence others to follow in the right path.

Another example of a characteristic of a good leader is to be able to control various situations. If a student witnesses another student cheating on a test, a good leader would be able to handle the situation properly without creating chaos in the classroom. Through controlling situations properly a leader is naturally forced to stand up and creates a better situation.

The most important quality a good leader must possess is the ability to communicate effectively with others. This ability will help those in need and guide others in the right direction. For example, if a person was thinking about sneaking out of their house, the leader would be able to persuade that person that sneaking out is wrong. The leader will help them find another solution to the situation and communicate the idea.

These are the characteristics of an effective leader. These qualities must be enforced to ensure that good leaders will always be the guiding lights for those who need that special guidance.

—Sue Fleming

It's You, Baby

it's you, baby.
it's that big, beautiful smile
that puts me in denial

it's those baby-blue eyes
that give me a surprise

it's that deep voice
that leaves me with no choice

it's that sandy blonde hair
that makes me feel like i'm being dared

it's those clothes that you wear
that make me see that you're there
baby, can't you see, it's everything
about you that pleases me?

—Lauren Snellings

Forever

Leah Andrews was a successful maid. She could clean a house from top to bottom in about two hours. Organization and planning was half the battle. She believed if you had a task you should jump into it at full force until you're done, then you can dilly-dally. She had cleaned houses for five years now and was quite happy with it. Sure, it had its downside just like anything else, but it made her happy when she was done. She could almost see her face in anything she cleaned. She had a certain way of folding the clothes, and you could always smell the strong yet inviting smell of Pinesol.

Her job was great. That wasn't the problem. It was her marriage. She just couldn't seem to clean that up. She and Steve just kept arguing over stupid things really, but for some reason it was important to them. They tried for months with counseling. They tried talking about what each other wanted, or needed. It just didn't work.

"Steve, honey, we have tried to salvage our marriage, but nothing seems to help. I vowed to always love you, and I know a part of me always will. It's just that I can't take the screaming and fighting. I just want to separate, and if that doesn't work we will take the next step. I don't want a divorce, though; it's so final. I just can't help remembering when we fell in love. There must have been something there."

"Why are you doing this?" Steve asked.

"Listen Steve, I can't take anymore of this bickering. I just need time alone to think. I don't know what I want anymore, and sometimes I think it's not you. You can be so sweet and then so difficult in the same breath." She answered him.

"Leah, if you leave, don't you dare bother coming back!"

"Why does everything have to be so final with you, Steve? Make up your mind, damn it!" Leah shouted at him. "Fine, Steve, if you want it that way, I'm gone. If you change your mind, here's the number where I can be reached. I'm getting out of this town, Steve. I'm moving back to Texas. Mrs. Wyatt, you remember, that lovely middle-aged woman who I started

out with. She was my first boss when I started the cleaning business. Well, we got to be fairly close and I was telling her the situation, and then she told me about her baby brother who needed a maid. She called him last week, and she gave me a good reference. I'm supposed to start on Monday; that's just three days away. If this is it, Steve, I thank you for trying with me. I know I'm not the easiest person to get along with."

At that moment she could feel a lump swelling in her throat and a deep aching in her heart. It was then she knew it was over, and she would never be back again.

She ran out to her car and started the engine. She could only pray that nothing would go wrong with her little Ford Tempo. She hadn't had the best luck with it, but she needed it to drive the 350 miles to east Texas. She drove ahead through the gravel driveway and took one last look at the birdhouse mailbox that read "Andrews." She didn't dare look back.

Leah knew this was going to be a long and difficult journey, almost an adventure, but the pain and loneliness she felt in her heart were unbearable. The loneliness devoured her whole body, and inside she felt numb. She couldn't believe what she had done. Steve had made threats before, and she had never taken him up on them, but now it was almost like she was lost. She never truly in her heart believed she would ever do it. She made the plans, but she never honestly thought she could walk out the door.

Driving down the highway, she began to think how wonderful her marriage started out to be. She met Steve at McDally's where they worked together. He approached her first and started talking to her. She was so honored to hear someone taking interest in her life. She instantly knew that they would be friends if they ever saw each other. He was working three jobs to pay for college, so who knew what shift he would be working? A couple of weeks later he called her at the children's home where she lived.

Yes, sad but true, Leah spent two years of her life there, with their strict rules. She knew she would have trouble dating anyone, especially since she was barely 17 and he had just

turned 20. She started talking to him on the phone secretly and never told anyone. Then one of the other girls overheard her and threatened to tell her caseworker, Audrey Zogas. So Leah told Audrey. Of course Audrey said no, you're not allowed to see him. The more they said no, the more she became determined to see him anyway.

See Leah was really into church and had gotten saved when she was 16. They couldn't deny her the right to go to church. Leah found it interesting that they could deny her happiness, but not her salvation.

As the months progressed, they sent letters, cards, and even tapes to each other. Then some of the head honchos decided to be sneaky. Leah had gotten grounded for losing her job. She was also caught at the mall, hand in hand with Steve. They grounded her from her boom box and television. They made her go to a different church so she wouldn't get to see the love of her life. She wasn't sure how he had become the love of her life so quickly, but that was what her heart was saying.

The good part of the whole story is that a lot of the people who worked at the children's home changed jobs, including Audrey. She was replaced by a woman named Dawn Elks. Dawn had been Leah's social worker before Audrey, when Leah had first gone into foster care. By this time, Leah and Steve were already engaged with the ring and everything. Dawn permitted them to sign out together. Before this, she could only sign out when Steve's mother supervised their visits. His mother, Corrina, had been very nice to agree to that. Now it was time to be alone. Everytime they saw each other they somehow got lost in each other's eyes. Anything they did was wonderful as long as they were together. Oh, the love they once had.

Then they got married, and everything changed pretty quickly. Friends were always over and Leah got ignored. Every weekend it was something different. Then Leah got in contact with an old boyfriend and curiosity got the best of her. She just needed a friend, but she ended up doing the worst thing she had ever done in her life. She cheated on Steve. She told

him the very same night it happened, and she could see his heart snap right in two. Leah just wanted to crawl under her chair and die. She never imagined how much the news would hurt him. She never believed someone could truly love her. She had gone through so many empty promises in her life. She just didn't know that someone could actually promise to love her and mean it.

She only had to stop at the gas station twice. She had made good time. When she arrived at Mr. Lander's house at 3 p.m. the next day, she had driven half the night and some of the day with no sleep. She was exhausted. She just grabbed all her baggage and knocked on the door. "Wait a sec!" a deep voice, shouted from inside. Mr. Landers opened the door.

"Hello, Mrs. Andrews. I wasn't expecting you until tomorrow."

"I know, but I didn't think you would mind. All I want to do is take my things up to my room. I haven't slept all night. I'm about to pass out as we speak," Leah said.

"That's fine, Mrs. Andrews," Mr. Landers said.

"Oh, please call me Leah."

"As you wish," he said with a grin. She could tell even the first time they met that he was attracted to her strawberry blonde hair and hazel eyes just by the way that he grinned. Leah had been working for Josh almost six months when she realized that she had some feelings for the six foot-four inch, dark haired, blue-eyed bachelor. She made sure she did an extra special job while she was working.

Josh was more like a friend than a boss was, and actually, Josh never did anything with anyone else. They were always talking and playing games when she wasn't working. One night they even danced to her favorite cowboy, Randy Travis. There was just something about his deep country accent that made her heart turn to mush. Josh had taught Leah how to two step and boogie kinda fast to country, a couples kind of dance.

Then the unexpected happened. After six months of working for Josh, talking with him about life and confiding in him with her past, Steve called her.

"Hello?" she answered.

"Honey, is that you?" the voice at the other end of the line said.

"Steve?" she said with shock.

"Why, yes, honey."

"What's going on? What do you need?"

"I need you, baby."

"What are you talking about, Steve?"

"I miss you so much, angel. Please come home. At first I tried to fight it, but now I know there could never be anyone else."

"Steve, I can't. I have a life here now." Leah said.

"Are you involved with that man you work for?"

"No, we're just friends, and I'm happy for the first time in a long time."

"Don't you love me anymore, Hon?" Steve asked.

"Sure, I think I always will, but I just can't leave here now. I just can't. Please don't make me feel guilty about not coming back to you." Leah said

"I'm going to go now. I can see you don't want me involved with your boss, and you don't want me to know." Steve quickly hung up.

Josh walked in from a long day at his firm while Leah was sitting there crying at the kitchen table.

"Leah, dear, what's wrong?" he asked.

"Steve just called. He wants me to go back to him. A part of me always will love him, and that part of me wants to go back. But I'm so happy to have a boss like you to listen to me, to make me feel important. But most of all you are a friend to me. I mean, our interests are so alike. You're so easy to talk to."

"Listen, Leah. If it were up to me, you would be here in this house with me forever. See, after my wife died, I shied away from the rest of the world, except for the people I worked with. I used to come home and eat a TV dinner, and then at night when the first star came out I would wish for a compan-

ion. A friend for life, you know, someone who believed in me, someone who listened. It's totally up to you Leah."

"I don't know what I want to do," Leah said.

The evening was a quiet one. Neither one of them felt like talking. He didn't want her to go, and he was afraid she would. Leah didn't want to leave Josh behind. He was her best friend. The next day she tended to her daily chores. She was constantly thinking about what she was going to do. In her heart she knew what she wanted. She wanted to stay with Josh. He wasn't just her best friend; she was falling in love with him. He could never know that. "He probably doesn't want to mix business with pleasure. I don't know if he feels that way about me. I'm separated. He wouldn't want to get involved in that mess. I mean, a successful man like him would not want to get involved with his maid. Sure, I love my job, but a man being the owner of his own firm being involved with his maid. That sounds so bizarre." She kept thinking to herself. She decided to fix supper. After all, it was almost five. Josh got home everyday at six. She decided to make fried chicken, homemade biscuits, mashed potatoes, and gravy. It just happened to be his favorite meal.

"What's cooking, Leah?" Josh asked when he got home.

"Your favorite!"

"Oh, Leah, you're so good to me. I've never had a maid like you. Course, I never had a maid before you, but still, you're great."

They sat down to eat the delectable dinner she had made. He talked about his day, his business, and his co-workers. She was always excited to hear his stories. She loved hearing about his work, something she never cared about with Steve.

"Well, Josh, I'm going to start the dishes," Leah said.

"OK, I want to see myself in them when you're done."

"Ha, Ha," Leah said with a smile.

Leah walked over, started her dishwater and put the dishes in the sink. She began to wash them. Josh came up behind her, and grabbed her by the waist. He turned her around. "You're not leaving are you?" he asked with tears in his eyes.

"No, Josh, I'm not going to leave. How could I? I'm happier than I have ever been."

Their lips softly met with a delicate kiss, then again with a more passionate one. He picked her up and carried her to his bedroom. They made love that night and confessed their love for each other. She was surprised to hear how he felt about her. It was overwhelming, the passionate poetry that come out of his mouth. The love he had had for her all along. She could sense he was attracted, but she never imagined he was in love with her.

After a while Steve stopped calling. Eventually he sent her divorce papers through the mail. It was a celebration when the divorce was final. After their night together, Josh and Leah were inseparable. Two years later, they got married, and what a beautiful ceremony it was. She had a candle-light dress with a long train. She held roses in her hands, and somehow she sensed this would be forever. The song that played at the reception was, of course, Randy Travis. A couple years after that they had twins, Joshua Andrew and Leanne Noel. And they all lived happily ever after.

—*Regina Mulkey*

Success

Success is accomplishing a dream.
Success is overcoming obstacles as language and math.
Success is feeling good about myself and others.
Success is feeling good about me.
Success is knowing that I can do it.
Success is depending on myself.
Success is having a career and making it in life.
Success is getting a good job in today's world.
Success is all that a person wants to be in life and attaining it.
Success is accomplishing a dream that I thought was
going to be hard.
Success is believing that a person can be whatever their
heart desires if they put their heart into it.
That is what success is to me.

—*Ivonne Burnett*

Woodcarving—A Hobby

I first became interested in woodcarving through another hobby, collecting carousel horses, a hobby that my wife and I share an interest in.

We are fortunate to live near a large amusement park, Cedar Point, that has several magnificent carousels. These are some of the finest examples of the carousel builders' art.

The Carousel Museum in Sandusky, Ohio, is also near our house, and it displays many of the colorful, elaborately decorated, jeweled horses and other animals that were carved by the master carvers of a bygone era. Their works brought thrills and enjoyment to generations of carousel riders.

After studying the works of these master carvers and examining many examples from my wife's miniature collection, I decided I'd like to try carving a small carousel horse.

At work I had heard of a man who did woodcarving, and I looked him up. Al was just the right person to get me started. As well as being an excellent woodcarver, Al was an enthusiastic advocate for woodcarving. Al thought everyone should be a woodcarver.

Al Clark had a shop in Bellevue, Ohio, where he stocked woodcarving supplies. He also taught carving classes and brought in talented carvers from other parts of the country to put on carving seminars.

I told Al of my desire to carve a miniature carousel horse, and he thought I should start with something simpler. He gave me a piece of wood, roughly shaped like a shoe, and told me to carve a boot out of it. I learned later that this is how he starts all his students. At the time, I really didn't want to carve a boot; I wanted to carve a carousel horse. I started without much enthusiasm, but after I got into it, it wasn't so bad. After a few days I had carved a pretty nice cowboy boot. I took it to Al. He looked at it and told me I'd done an excellent job. I told him I wanted to do a horse now. He still thought a horse was too advanced for a beginner, but I told him I was determined to carve one.

I got some wood and cut out a blank. In about a week I had carved a very nice carousel horse. I presented my carving to Al, and he was amazed at the quality of my work. To tell the truth, I had amazed myself. Al said I had a natural talent, and I guess I must have, because I have surprised myself many times since.

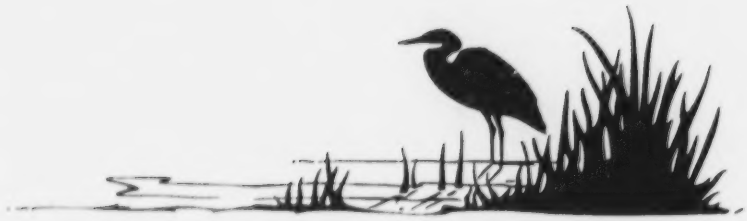
I've carved many miniature carousel horses and several menagerie animals that have become additions to my wife's collection. I've also carved several figures, cigar store Indians, and Civil War soldiers.

Ohio has become a center of the resurgent interest in carousels, the restoration of old machines, and the manufacturing of new ones. In Mansfield, Ohio, two prominent companies restore carousels and carve new figures, Carousel Magic Co. and the Carousel Works. In Garrettsville, Ohio, lives a man, Joe Leonard, who was chosen by the Walt Disney Co. to carve 30 new horses for the carousel at their new park near Paris, France.

Woodcarving can be both a hobby and a business. I now have an 8-foot log in my garage, curing. I hope, time permitting, to carve it into a life size cigar store Indian.

—Bob Evans

Nature



Lizard

Lazy, hungry
Eating, sleeping, climbing
They are great pets
Sitting, hiding, seeking
Colorful, friendly
Favorable

—*Carrie Venclik*

Winter

Cold and bitter
Frigid, freezing, snowy
Warmth with hot cocoa and snuggling
Comfort

—*Tara Martin, Dena Barger,*
Anna Khulenberg

Autumn

It has been getting cold. A lot of leaves have already changed their color and fallen. We don't have a big yard, but we have to clean up fallen leaves, filling several garbage bags every weekend. It is hard work, and it takes several hours; however, I don't hate this yard work because autumn is my favorite season.

When I was in Japan, I used to go to a lot of famous places to enjoy excursions for viewing autumnal tints. As Japan stretches long from north to south, I could thoroughly enjoy them for 2 months by visiting different places. For example, in the northern part of Japan, leaves usually start to turn red or yellow at the end of September. The best time to enjoy them may be around October 10th. In the middle of Japan, around Tokyo, the best time is from the end of October to beginning of November. In the middle west of Japan, around Osaka, the leaves are most beautiful about November 10th and so on.

Kyoto and Nara are two of my favorite places to enjoy autumn tints in Japan. These cities are located in the central part of western Japan. There are many historical places which were built—old temples and shrines. Some of them are more than 1,000 years old. Each of them has a beautiful Japanese traditional-style garden that I love. These gardens are arranged with many kinds of bushes, trees, flowers, mosses, and so on. We can enjoy viewing the gardens every season, but I especially like them in the autumn. As almost all traditional Japanese buildings are built of wood, I think the autumn tints make a good combination with these old buildings' colors.

I am not sure where there are good places to enjoy viewing the autumn tints in the U.S. When I went to the Smoky Mountains in June, there were beautiful landscapes. I can imagine that this would be a good place to visit in autumn also; however, I have not been there in autumn yet.

Since I have married, I have not gone on any excursions to view autumnal tints. Even though I have not gone, I do enjoy autumn colors around here. Cincinnati and its surrounding areas offer much beauty and nature all year long.

—Yuki Ohashi

Snowflakes

Icy, slippery
Snow fighting, snow building, snow shoveling
Cold, fun, hot chocolate, fireplace
Snowflakes

—Pippa Pang

The Moonlight Runner and Lost Ballast Island

The year was 1928 and out on the lake was a time of high drama. The 18th Amendment had transformed ordinary people into "Rum Runners." Nearly 900,000 cases of liquor were shipped to lakefront towns from over a hundred Canadian breweries and distilleries in the first seven months of Prohibition. Boatloads of smugglers were gliding across the lake. Bootlegging had become a glittering world of fast riches for those who dared to defy the law. There was never a shortage of buyers on the American side, and this new industry created many new jobs on both borders. Most local police were sympathetic toward the "Rum Runners," but the federal government saw things much differently. They were determined to drive them from the lakes, and they did not hesitate to use armed force.

It was during this time that there was a beautiful young lady named Magi. She was employed as a maid at a hotel on South Bass Island. She had fallen in love with a former bootlegger. He was known only as "Max" to Island people. Friends of Magi had warned her of the risks involved, as well as the reputation of a gangster heart, but she loved Max and he loved her. They had met about 3 months earlier when Max was making deliveries to several "Speak Easys" on the island.

Max had been making runs for quite a while to islands, as well as to the mainland and had become well-known. His 30-foot Belle Isle Bearcat, "Midnight Fox," was becoming a legend on the lake. He knew it was a matter of time before the Coast Guard would catch up with him. Max and Magi had plans for him to make just one more run before the busy July 4th weekend. Magi would then return with Max to Canada, to marry and continue their lives in a much slower style with the wealth he had made on the lake. By this time though, the Revenuers and the Coast Guard were on full alert knowing there would be a lot of activity before the holiday. Max suspected this and had a plan. He would slip into the harbor between

Peach Point and Gibraltar. In a smaller rowboat guided by a lantern, Magi would lead the way through the submerged rocks.

The stage was set. It was July 2nd and there was half of a moon low on the horizon. It took Max only minutes to cross the lake and deliver his illicit cargo to Oak Point. With Magi's help all went as planned. In a while they had the cases of scotch whiskey unloaded. They both knew that in a matter of minutes, they would be off on their new life together.

As they slid past Lost Ballast, little did they know what fate awaited them. In an instant, a white blast of light splintered into the boat. Max instantly pushed down hard on the throttle. At that exact moment, the 40-foot Coast Guard boat that had lain in ambush position opened up with a hail of deadly machine gun fire. By the time the Liberty engine on the Coast Guard boat got up to speed, they could not locate the "Midnight Fox." Not until dawn did they find the many bits and pieces floating near the ambush site. This led them to believe there were no survivors, and all had slipped to the bottom. Max, Magi, and the "Midnight Fox" were never seen again.

For over a decade, through the passing of time, Islanders often thought of them and their destiny. Then in 1942, when WWII news filled everyone's thoughts, this personal notice appeared in the Wheatley Ontario Daily News . . . .

> "To my beloved Captain Max Fox of the Canadian Royal Navy, whose life was taken by a German torpedo in the North Atlantic, please rest now my warrior. May all your Midnights be filled with my love." Magi

—Phillip Edwards

Besiege

The clouds move in like
a wild pack of horses.

The storm covers the sky
as if it were a dark blanket.

The rain falls like a boulder
from the sky.

The day becomes night.

The evening sets in,
and the moon is as bright
as an owl's hoo.

—*Morrell Phillips*

Treasure of Gull Island

It was unseasonably warm that October. Kennedy was in the White House and the attention of the entire world was focused on a small Caribbean island 90 miles south of Florida. Yet amongst all this madness, I was focused on a small island closer to home. Gull Island had reappeared from the depths of the lake, due to low water levels, for the first time in many years. It's an island where myth seems stronger than truth.

Old timers often told tales of lake pirates who operated off the island around the turn of the century. During the day they would use Middle Island, Canada, as a hideout and after dark would cross over to Gull Island and build a large fire creating the illusion of a ship on fire. Silently they waited for innocent prey to unknowingly ground their ships in the shallow reefs surrounding the island, as they tried to come to the aid of the "burning ship." This crafty bunch, using the cover of darkness and surprise as their weapons, would then rob the Good Samaritans of their worldly possessions and loot the ship of anything else of value. After slicing all the sails they would set their victims adrift. To be sure, pirates were not generally nice guys. It was still the era of maritime lawlessness on the lakes, and the scoundrels took full advantage. The scuttlebutt of the time was that they would often bury what they felt might be too risky to be caught with and recover it at a later time.

This is where Larry and I enter into the hunt. That summer my mind was full of adventure, partly due to restless energy and partly because of a magazine titled "Treasure Hunter." Not having much of an income and a lifestyle of minimum means, I finally borrowed enough money to order the legendary "1260X Deluxe Bad Ground Relic Machine Metal Detector" from Music City Detectors of Nashville, Tennessee. The day it finally arrived was heaven. I still recall that Larry seemed to be dazed with astonishment upon its arrival. I admit we both had succumbed to pure emotion. Our dream was coming closer to reality. That night I hardly slept a wink; my heart beat with excitement.

Before dawn, we were up and on our way. I had borrowed my boss's fourteen-foot Lyman equipped with a 25 horse Johnson outboard. The 126OX's batteries were fully charged. We had food, shovels, and all the equipment we needed to find buried treasure. I always relied on Larry to remember everything. He was the type you would call a thinker. Lord, but he had an imagination. Throwing caution to the wind, we pushed off. Fall clung to the lake, but all went well. We were two rogues on the lake, in pursuit of riches, true Buccaneers! Gull Island held a bounty of adventure, butted gold, swords, muskets—the wealth was endless. Our minds raced with anticipation.

Finally, the Island was a welcome sight. As we beached the boat, I felt compelled to say, "Ahoy Matey, Land Ho!" We had tackled all the barriers and come in search of treasure. Larry helped me get the 1260X out of the boat. I was tired from the trip and lack of sleep from the night before, but Larry's energy was contagious. After several hours of digging up beer caps and fish hooks, Larry's energy also was starting to waiver. We now were afraid of our dreams were just dreams.

Then it happened. The "Bad Ground Relic Detector" started making noises as if we had found the mother lode. As we dug, visions of gold coins passed through my mind. Whatever it was had to be big. How were we going to divide up the booty? Larry had always been fair-minded. As we looked into the hole, I think we were both overcome with shock. We had uncovered a Lyle cannon. What a remarkable find! Larry had a glow of accomplishment on his face as big as the sunrise.

Our next challenge was how to get it off the island. We slid it to the water's edge, but all efforts to lift it into the boat failed. Larry was starting to favor his back, so we abandoned that idea. As strange as it now sounds, we came to the conclusion to tow it using the full length of our anchor line. I attached six adult life jackets and the four flotation seat cushions around the cannon. My mind told me we could do it. It would be a slow go, but the forward movement would keep our treasure on

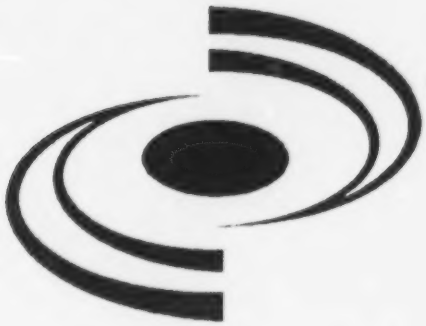
the surface. Not knowing what lay ahead, we were sea bound. Attempting to give a lucid explanation as to what happened next still brings sorrow.

The wind was picking up out of the west. We were holding our own until we left the lee of Kelley's Island. At that point, terror raised its ugly head. With all the weight at the back of the boat, coupled with our slow speed, we were now taking waves over the transom. I looked at Larry; he looked at me. We were at an inescapable conclusion. We both knew we had but one option. Cut the line! With the line cut the Lyman now responded. As we circled back, our cannon was no longer visible. We had made basic errors in judgment.

I know you will find this hard to believe, but it's been over 35 years and that Lyle cannon still tempts me back. Larry is no longer living, and I miss him very much. It seems like it was only yesterday that we set foot on that Brigadoon Isle. I still recall the moment Larry jumped off the boat as if he were a young pup again. Dogs like Larry are one in a million. Maybe, though, this isn't the end of the tale. As I write this, one of Larry's third generation offspring lies next to my chair. He looks at me with that same spark of adventure in his eyes. His name is Bill.

—*Phillip Edwards*

Reminiscences



The Night Before Christmas 1998

'Twas the night before Christmas
When all through the house
Three children were stirring and so was the mouse.
The socks were hung by the beds with care
In hopes that Santa Claus soon would be there.
The children were restless and stirring in bed
With visions of Nintendo and dolls dancing in their heads.
And Mom in her babushka and I in my hat
Had just settled down with Leno and that.
When outside my window a bang much like thunder
Made me jump up from TV to see what was asunder.
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow
Gave the luster of midday to objects below.
And what did my star shocked eyes behold
But a bright new snowmobile with a driver of old.
With a rev of the engine and a flicker of lights
We recognized Santa Claus at very first sight.
With more revving of the engine we knew he was here.
His whistling and shouting made it quiet clear
That this was still Claus, but without the reindeer.
With a swisn of the blades, the snow did fly
As a doughnut spin Santa did try.
He slid through the yard and up to the door
With a bag full of toys straight from the store.
With the tinkling of keys and a turn of the latch
Then entered Santa with the big Christmas Catch.
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his toes
With snow and icicles covering his clothes.
With a bag full of loot he had flung on his back
He looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes were all bloodshot, his dimples sunk in
His cheeks were like cherries, his nose as big as sin.
His tiny lips blue as the sky,
And the beard on his chin was not even dry.
With a candy cane tight in his teeth

He misses his pipe with smoke like a wreath.
He had a thin face and a nice solid belly
No fat one this elf, no trips to the deli.
He was lean and mean, a 90's type elf.
And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word but went straight to his work,
and filled all the socks then turned with a jerk.
And laying a finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod out the door he goes.
He sprang out the door and slid to his ride,
And away he went like the rip tide.
But I heard him explain as he drove into the night
"Christmas is tiring in the '90's—it just isn't right!"

—*Jeremy Helmbright,*
Juanita Lindgren, Tim Ross,
Shirley Tingler

Legend of North Bay

In January the winter winds blow cold across Kelley's Island. Visitors are scarce except for a breed of individuals known as "Ice Fishermen." In the early 60's, I was one of those risk takers. I can't remember the exact date, but the ice and the fishing were exceptionally good. The winter blast of cold weather had come earlier than usual that year. The ice had been building for weeks. The out-of-town newspapers were keeping up with the island fishing reports, and interest was high. Each weekend, the island air services were strained with fishermen. It was a lure most could not resist.

On a weekday, my flight left Carl Keller Field at first light. Off in the distance was a brilliant sunrise. Upon landing, I gathered my gear and headed for the North Bay. The best fish I had ever tasted were caught in North Bay. By the time the sun had reached its peak, I was a mile offshore fishing in thirty feet of water. I was pulling in fish and off in the distance I could see others doing the same. As the afternoon wore on, the weather started to deteriorate quickly. What started out as light snow had turned heavy. It soon became a "white out" condition with the wind gusting in all directions. With the wind and snow howling around me, I was hoping that this was just a passing squall, and I made up my mind to wait it out.

By the time I had gathered my gear and set out for shore, the storm had intensified. The temperature felt sub zero. I tried to pick up my pace. Glancing at my watch, I found that I had been walking for almost an hour and still had not reached land. Pressure cracks were starting to open up with water being forced up on the ice. Darkness was settling in rapidly and my mind was playing games with me. I realized I was lost.

Then it happened! I stepped into an open pressure crack and was in icy water up to my chest. Kicking desperately, I struggled to pull myself up on the ice. I lay there, both mentally and physically drained. It was almost completely dark now, and

the winds were blowing at gale force. While trying to gather my strength, I felt something touch my leg. I opened my eyes to find a large black Lab next to me. I didn't quite understand, but I knew the Lab was there to help me. Grasping the Lab's collar, I was able to pull myself up. Walking was difficult. My clothes were frozen, and pain from the cold was shooting up my arms and legs. As I held tightly to the Lab's collar for support, I couldn't help wondering if he might be leading me further out onto the lake. But it seemed he instinctively knew the difference between good and bad ice. His main purpose was to watch over me.

I had no idea how long we traveled together. Finally I felt land under my feet. As I whispered, "We're OK now," I started up the embankment toward the road. In the distance I saw headlights approaching. It was the Village Police Chief searching for lost fishermen. As I got in the car, I turned to look for the Lab. He vanished as fast as he had appeared. I imagined that he headed for home and a warm bed. I told the Chief that tomorrow I must locate the Lab and thank his owners.

After a quick ride up Division Street, we arrived at the Lodge, The Chief helped me inside. Joe, the owner, offered me some hot soup and a badly needed brandy. I was able to tell the others of my frigid ordeal after heat from the old stove had penetrated my frozen body, When I finished my story, Joe said he knew for a fact that no one on the island had a black Lab. I said it couldn't be true; one saved my life today.

Joe was very thoughtful for a moment before stepping into his back room and returning with a tattered scrapbook. I could see in his eyes the tenderness he felt for this old scrapbook. Joe said he had a story to share with me. Turning the old pages, he pulled out a newspaper clipping from 1924. It told of an island resident who perished along with his black Lab when their auto plunged through the ice on North Bay. As the story stated, both were able to get out of the auto before it went down, but the man could not climb out of the icy water. Each time he pushed

the dog onto the ice, the Lab would jump back into the water to try to save his master. After a few minutes, neither could struggle any longer. Both of their lives' voyages had come to an end. Neither had ever been found,

As Joe talked, I let my mind drift back to the Lab, truly convinced that the experience was real. The depth of serenity I had felt could not have come from a myth. Was it possible, while I lay there on the ice, I had indeed passed through that doorway of lost souls? Could that black Lab still prowl the North Bay, always willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for any unfortunate soul lost on his journey?

To you, My Loyal Companion, I vow to keep your spirit alive.

—Phillip Edwards

A Christmas Memory

As a child, I remember, we didn't have many toys. But we had a very big Christmas tree my mother had put up for us. We were poor, but most of all we had lots of love.

I remember the tree was very big. She had lights on it that bubbled and a few bulbs. She had put icicles on one by one in layers. On top was a big star she had made from a shoebox and covered with shiny paper. With the lights on, the star would shine.

I remember my grandma playing Santa Claus for her five grandchildren. On the front porch there was a loose board. My grandma stepped on the board, and it came up and hit her in the head and made a knot. She still was Santa, the one with a knot on her head. That Christmas we had some apples, oranges, bananas, candy and a toy each.

Our Christmas was a good one. Our grandma was OK. We played with our toys and watched the tree lights bubble and the star shine. Most of all, we had love.

—Kathryn Yaden

Bulletin Board

I am a single parent of four beautiful children and a grateful recovering alcoholic.

Recently, I had the opportunity to participate in a recovery program through the Veteran's Recovery Center at the Veteran's Hospital in Brecksville, Ohio. While there, I was assigned the task of writing appointments for other veterans on the bulletin board—information such as location and time of the appointment, as well as with whom the appointment was scheduled. Even though each veteran was required to check the bulletin board daily, missed appointments were common. As a result of these missed appointments, I came up with the idea of giving each veteran a motivational thought, the title of which was "Thought to Live By."

These daily motivational inspirations were intended to provide comfort for veterans when they found themselves feeling angry, alone, depressed, or simply wondering, "Why am I here?" One evening I was sitting in the day room and overheard two ladies talking. One of them seemed especially distraught over the consequences of her alcohol abuse, particularly, her appearance, which was pallid and repulsive. She was withdrawn and did not seem to grasp the concept of powerlessness. The following day, when writing the veterans' appointments, I included the following thought: "When we were drinking and drugging, denial caused us to blemish our appearance; but, when we admitted we were powerless, it promoted our inner beauty to flourish." When the young lady read it, her whole attitude changed. She started being more open and felt better about herself. She told me that she appreciated me giving her hope, and I replied, "The hope I gave you came from God as He works through me." Now, the veterans look forward to reading the board each morning. When they seem down or depressed, the writings seem to help carry them through the day.

Note: Although the above inspirational thought was written for the young lady, it has a very clear message for me; it serves as a reminder to keep me focused on what I need to do to bring about a change in myself . . . and that is to share my experiences, hopes and desires and to help another, just like Dr. Bob says in the Big Book. *

*Doctor Bob, a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, June 10, 1935.

—Ron C. Lewis

Joy

I never could understand
why my grandma could sit on the porch all day long.
The older I get, the more I understand
it's life's simplest things that give me the most joy.
The joy of waking up to a brand new day,
the joy of spending time with family and friends,
the joy of watching flowers bloom in the summer
that I planted in the spring.
These things give me the most joy.
I can now understand why grandma could
sit on the porch all day.

—Katherine Moore

My Most Memorable Toy

The year was 1951, and I was eight years old. We lived on a farm in Delta, Ohio. It was in northwestern Ohio. We had a big family; I had four brothers and three sisters. There were eight children and my Mom and Dad at that time. Anyway, we didn't have a lot back then, but my mom and dad made it work.

It was Christmas Eve, and everybody was excited about Santa Claus coming. Inside, we had decorations all over the house. My dad and I went out to the woods to cut down the Christmas tree. It was all covered with snow. It was big, bushy, and beautiful when all the ornaments and garlands were on it. Outside, the roof, cars, and sidewalks were covered with snow.

In the house, my mom was letting my brothers and sisters and me get the food ready for Santa and his reindeers. We put celery and lettuce out for the reindeer. Then we put cookies and milk out for Santa. The most I thought I would get from Santa was a teddy bear or a model car. Earlier on I saw this Red Flyer train set in a store window. It had coal cars, the engine car, a caboose, animal cars, flat bed cars, and passenger cars. It was beautiful. I never wanted anything so bad in my life.

Well, it was bedtime, and Mom and Dad tucked all of us kids in bed and told us to go to sleep because Santa was coming soon to leave our presents under the tree. Needless to say, the next morning when I got up it was Christmas Day. I woke my brothers and sisters up. I was the first one to the tree. To my amazement, I saw that beautiful Red Flyer train set. My eyes got as big as saucers. I got as excited as our cow Betsy did eating her favorite cud. My Dad looked at me, smiled, and said, "What do you say, Son?" Then I turned and gave my Mom and Dad a great big hug and kiss.

—*Jim Flowers*

Looking In

You look at me and see a girl
Who lives inside the golden world.
But don't believe
That's all there is to see.
You'll never know the real me.
She smiles through a thousand tears
And harbors adolescent fears.
She dreams of all that she can never be.
She wades insecurity
And hides herself inside of me.
Don't say she takes it all for granted.
I am aware of all I have.
Don't think that I am disenchanted.
Please understand.
It seems as though I've always been
Somebody outside looking in.
Well here I am for all of them to bleed
But they can't take my heart from me.
And they can't bring me to my knees.
They'll never know the real me.

—*Stephanie Doane*

My Memories of the Village

Duong Son is a village where I was born and grew up. It has brought me many good memories.

Duong Son is a small village, about seven miles from Hue City and along the river Bo. The river flows from the mountains to the sea. The village is enclosed by green bamboo. The front of the village is a small field of paddy (rice), and behind it is a field of vegetables, cassavas, corn, and peanuts. In between it has a church with a belfry and a school from kindergarten to grade five. This center is also a place for people in this village to gather and communicate with each other. From far away, you can recognize this center because the church's belfry is the highest. When people got lost, they used the belfry to orient themselves and find their way.

The weather in Doung Son changes depending on the season: spring and autumn are comfortable, while summer is hot and winter is cold. In winter, it rains persistently—all day long. Annually, we have floods two to four times or more; therefore, the ways (roads) are muddy, and it is hard for us to walk or ride. Each family has a little boat when the flood comes. During the flooded nights, I remember the sounds from the frogs, bullfrogs, and hylas; their sounds were sorrowful. When the tide ebbed, we usually had boat races on the river or on the flooded fields. We really enjoyed this game.

Most of the people in Duong Son made a living by cultivating and breeding; therefore, when there was inclement weather, we had a bad harvest. Many people in the village worried and had to cope with this problem.

Every morning the bell from the church was rung, and cocks crowed like an alarm to awake everyone. After that, I heard the noisy sounds from someone who called others. Some villagers went to church, to work, prayed at their homes, or prepared to go to school. The bell also rang at noon and evening to remind us that is was time for lunch or time to go to evening church. When I was young, my friend and I prayed in

the evening at church; afterwards we usually stayed to practice singing and dancing, or we just talked or played. We really enjoyed playing and talking under the moonlight. We also liked to breathe the fresh air in the summer.

My memories of Doung Son are engraved in my heart and my mind. Although I am now far from it, I will always remember this lovely village.

—*Phuong Nguyen*

A Surprise Visit

All the little boys and girls
Were waiting patiently
For Jolly Old Saint Nicholas
Was coming there, you see.

Bringing gifts for everyone,
Even Mom and Pop,
Janie wants a dolly and
Billy wants a top.

Oh, what was that noise I heard
By the Christmas tree?
Do you think it could be
Santa leaving toys for me?

I looked around the corner,
And boy was I surprised.
There were toys and gifts for everyone
In every shape and size.

A flash of red was all I saw
As Santa got away,
The reindeer in the lead
And Santa in his sleigh.

—Carol Rudder

The Big Jigsaw Puzzle

Since reading a book about the Sistine Chapel, I have been adoring the Chapel. One day I stopped by a shopping center. The jigsaw puzzle of the painted ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was right in front of me. I thought to myself "I have got to get this one!" But the puzzle cost almost $100 and on top of that, it was 8,000 pieces. I debated for a long time!

After the long debate, I started thinking, "Well, it would be cheaper than going to the Vatican to see it. As a matter a fact, in our house there is a person who is crazy about and good at jigsaws. Even though I may give up, my husband may be able to do it." So I did not waver to buy it any more.

For this reason, we got the 8,000-piece jigsaw puzzle. My husband was very excited before we opened the jigsaw puzzle's box, but I was a little bit nervous. Anyway we opened the box. Surprisingly these pieces were separated into four bags, 2,000 pieces in each bag. I thought something was not right, because we had to get $100 worth.

My husband is completely crazy about doing jigsaw puzzles. He usually finishes 1,000 pieces in three or four business days. (Therefore I usually only buy cheaper jigsaw puzzles!!) He may finish a 2,000-piece puzzle in a week. It means we may need only a month until the 8,000-piece jigsaw puzzle is done. I did not think that we would get the $100 dollars worth if we put together each bag of 2,000 pieces. So we mixed all of the pieces and ended up with 8,000 pieces in one box together. Finally, we started the 8,000 piece jigsaw puzzle.

Whenever we put together any jigsaw puzzles, at first we choose the frame pieces from all the pieces. Next we categorize color, shape, or specially printed characters from pieces left in the box. Then we use some boxes and categorize the characteristics of each piece which are shape, color, pattern, and so on. After we roughly finish categorizing them, we start to put together the frame of pieces on the table covered with paper.

The reason why the table is covered with paper is that we will use glue to save the puzzle when we finish it.

We started the 8,000-piece puzzle as we usually do. At first, we categorized like we normally do and brought all the pieces for a frame. Usually, this categorizing is very easy because those pieces have one or two straight sides. However, it was difficult this time to find them from a lot of pieces. We were somewhat discouraged; we barely found the pieces for the frame. Of course, it was impossible to do this jigsaw puzzle on a table. The long side consisted of 160 pieces, which was about 9 feet, and the short side consisted of 50 pieces, which was 3 feet. We decided that the small room in which we started this jigsaw puzzle was dedicated to the puzzle exclusively and put it together on the floor.

By the way, the picture printed on this jigsaw puzzle was a copy of the ceiling drawing of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. The original picture was painted by Michelangelo in the 16th century, and he drew pictures about some stories from the Bible. As the picture was painted with a lot of pictures of God, people, and angels, it is easy to imagine that Michelangelo had a difficult job. After he had done this job, a lot of ceremonies took place in the Sistine Chapel. Candles were used to light it for around 500 years. A lot of soot covered over his pictures; therefore, the color of pictures had changed, but this change was very slow, so everybody believed that Michelangelo liked to use sooty colors. About 20 years ago, priests in the Roman Catholic Church decided to clean up and repair all of the pictures on the wall and ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. When four specialists had done this job for almost thirteen years, bright and beautiful color pictures showed up. It was big news to change the definition of Michelangelo's paintings. The jigsaw puzzle we bought was made in the memory of the Sistine Chapel repairing.

Anyway, after we put together the frame pieces, we started to categorize the inside frame. However, all pieces looked so similar because a lot of people were drawn. It was very hard, so we needed three weeks until we had done the outside and inside frame. Next, we did not know what to do about categorizing

because of so many pieces. We had around 6,500 pieces left yet. We started to find the pieces on somebody's face and body or the pieces that had obviously different characteristics such as color, shape, and so on.

Not only did we categorize them, but we also tried to put them together whenever we could. I wondered whether we could finish this jigsaw puzzle. We had to keep our concentration when we put together each piece, but I usually could not keep my concentration. I would try the jigsaw puzzle, give up, and play computer games or sometimes sleep next to the puzzle instead.

Even though I gave up, my husband never gave up doing the jigsaw puzzle. He had wonderful concentration. Since we opened this jigsaw puzzle, he enjoyed categorizing and putting it together everyday.

On a business day, as soon as he got up, he spent around thirty minutes on the puzzle until he took a shower. After he came back home from his office, he did the puzzle until dinner. He ate his dinner quickly because he could not control his thoughts about his desire to put together the puzzle, and he worked on the puzzle until he went to bed.

Over the weekend, he sometimes did the puzzle all day. For instance, soon after he got up around 9 o'clock, he went to the puzzle room and started the puzzle. At the lunchtime, he stopped the puzzle and had lunch. Then he went back to the puzzle room and did the puzzle again until dinnertime. Of course, soon after he had finished his dinner, he started the jigsaw puzzle until he went to bed.

After two months, it seemed that there were about 2,000 leftover pieces. He became much more excited about finishing this jigsaw puzzle and he sped up putting it together.

Finally, this 8,000-piece puzzle was completed after two months and one week. While we put together the puzzle, I never vacuumed the puzzle room because I did not want to sweep up some pieces mistakenly, so, there were no missing pieces. I really believe that we got our $100 worth. The completed

puzzle looked gorgeous, and I was deeply impressed by Michelangelo's talent once more.

Now we have a new problem—how and where do we hang this complete puzzle? Since the size is nine feet by three feet, I cannot find a nice frame and I cannot find a big enough wall in our small house for this puzzle. Such being the case, the poor puzzle still lays on the floor. I hit upon the idea; how about placing the puzzle on the ceiling in our basement, as if our basement were the Sistine Chapel?

—*Yuki Ohashi*

A Christmas Memory

My best Christmas memory was growing up on the farm with my four sisters and three brothers.

My father and mother struggled during the Depression to raise eight children. They didn't have very much money to spend at Christmastime. We would always go out in the woods and cut our own Christmas Tree and decorate the tree with our own handmade ornaments.

The night before Christmas, we would hang up our stockings around the fireplace. The next morning our father and mother would wake us up and say, "I think Santa Claus has been here." Our stockings would be filled with fruit, candy and nuts.

And for Christmas dinner we would usually have fried chicken with all the trimmings.

Those are the most memorable Christmases of all.

—*Ethel Bullock*

She

She had been so lovely to look at,
but her heart had grown cold.
Too many times of doing crack
with so many strangers untold.
Once she had been in love,
and that had been the start
of broken promises and a broken heart.
To get even, she found lots of men
to wine her and dine her for their own end.
She had given up her children
for drink, drugs, fun and men.
Now her children are all grown.
Their hearts have been hardened
with the pain when they were young.
To know they were not as important
to their mother as doing her own thing.
So when they looked at her cold, lifeless body,
they did not feel any pain,
or think of what might have been
had she loved and taken care of them.

—Norma King

My Most Memorable Christmas

Growing up in a mining town, Christmas was a happy and important event in our lives.

The miners and the company would see that everyone in our community got lots of goodies as this was the only time most of the children would get treats.

The miners and the company would match a donation beginning in early December. The company would purchase gum, apples, oranges, bananas, Cracker Jacks, and a good assortment of lots of candies.

A crew of employees of the company would meet at the company store and fill #8 brown bags. They would fill them so full there was only enough space left to twist the top to keep them from spilling. This would be a real treat.

The treats would be transferred to the church for Santa and his helpers to hand out on Christmas Eve. This was the only night everyone was in church. No one would miss their treat.

The church was high on a hill. The only way of getting there was by truck or by hearse. The ladies of the church and the school teachers would decorate the church. It was so beautiful when the lights were turned on; the church lit up the entire community.

Each Sunday School class would draw names. This would ensure that everyone had a gift under the tree to be given out at the end of the program with our bags of goodies from Santa and his helpers.

This Christmas I remember clearly because it was the first time I ever got a popcorn ball for Christmas. It was usually gloves or a hanky.

A girl named Boots drew my name. She informed me there would be no hankies, but something nice. I took her at her word, so when my gift was handed to me I anxiously opened it. To my surprise, I found a popcorn ball. I was more embarrassed than surprised, as everyone was watching.

My mother made me return the popcorn ball. Boots promised me a nice gift, but I never received anything from her.

Soon afterwards, she left our community and I never saw or heard from her again.

If I ever chance to meet Boots in the future, I know we could have a good laugh over my most memorable Christmas of all.

—Oveda Pendleton

Spiritual

From Two to One

Two souls, once one, now must become two again.
Two lives, once one, now are breaking apart.
Two hearts, once in love, are now going their separate ways.
Two bodies, once bound together, are now astray.
Two promises, once made, are now just memories
of yesterday.

—*Karen Smith*

I Am Free

Once I was a prisoner
Lost inside myself
With the world surrounding me
Wondering through the misery
But now I am free . . .

You gave me a breath of life
Unclouded my eyes
With sweet serenity
Lightening a ray of hope for me
And now I am free . . .

Free to soar
Free to live
Free to laugh
Free to shine
Free to give
Free to love
Free enough to fly.

Once I was so alone
Unsteady and cold
But your love rained down upon me
Washing away uncertainty
But now
I am free . . .

—*Stephanie Doane*

Mama's God

Mama is sick
Oh God no
She's only fifty-six

Mama is good
Please God
Wait if you would

Mama's got a lot to do
Please God
I beg of you

Mama has the faith and trust
Please God
There's no rush

Mama knows the time is near
Please God
Do you hear?

Mama's asleep
Please God
She's in your arms to keep

Mama has gone from this earth
Please God
Give her your warmth

Mama can never be replaced
Please God
Take her in your grace

Mama is sadly missed
Please God
Help me with this

—*Sandra J. Zile*

When a Baby Howls

I was just like a seed ready to bloom when I was thrown into a womb. Like a widow spider. What a web did I spin. I felt like a bug caught in its trap. I was trapped—no way out—for helplessly did I scream, without a shout.

I felt that I was brought into this world only to see such terrible sights. What to my father's bloodshot alcoholic eyes did appear, was a toy to him—not a child. When it was my father's turn to "rock me to sleep," he would use me like an old dirty sheet. I would lie in my crib trying not to cry, because I felt like I would die. I had a cry, but not the cry of a newborn child. It sounded like a howl of a wolf. The only bonding I received was an abuse bonding, like when a cat will hold down another of its prey—just to have its way.

I began to grow older, fast, faster, and faster, like a racing roller coaster. As a toddler I was smacked around, thrown from room to room, kicked like a rag doll. I was beat for things I never did or deserved. Life for me had no meaning or no turn. Everything around me became so dark. I sat through my toddler years wondering what it would be like to have someone who cared. I never did own a doll or any toys to play with. I think the reason was I would be seen as a child, and not his to do with as he pleased.

As I grew older, much more trauma did I have, more frequent, worse. I became afraid to go to sleep because that's when he would sneak. I stayed real thin for this trauma I was in. When I was approximately 7 or 8 years old, I started using drugs, trying to find an escape or a way out. Nothing worked. There was no drug for the cure. I hid in closets from him for days at a time. There were 9 of us children. I was his pick of the crop. My sister would bring me food and would try to keep me hid. I would relieve myself in the closet with terrible smells that would make you sick. I could hear the screaming voice of him saying "Where is she? I'm going to kill her, beat her." He would be outraged. I would be so scared. I'd never cry, but so

often I would let out a yell, like a helpless rabbit being eaten by its prey.

I bet you're wondering where my mother was through all of this. She had been so abused by him she was in a mental institution—always trying to kill herself. I came home one day and found her on the kitchen floor with a knife in her. I was so scared and helpless. They had given her so many shock treatments she knew nothing. She had a mental illness called paranoia-schizophrenia.

When I was 14 I wandered off to get pregnant—that was my escape. I became pregnant at the age of 14 and quit school. My father never permitted me to go to school. He was always in court for neglect. I was still doing drugs at the age of 14, even when I was pregnant. I stayed married to my baby's father for 9 years. He mentally abused me also. I found out I inherited my mother's mental illness. I started repeating history by trying to kill myself. I ended up in a mental institution. The doctors overdosed me on all kinds of pills.

I bet you're wondering through all this how I survived and how old I am. I am now 37 and found a Savior, Jesus Christ. I have three children—one boy age 20, and two girls ages 11 and 12. I'm now seeking God, I'm off the drugs, and I'm back in school to finish my education. I have a wonderful family now, a new wonderful husband that is a saint. I am now an incest survivor. There is a lot more to tell, maybe someday in a biography. But to this day, I have no tears or doubts or fears. I have an unusual cry that's a different sound, never before heard. I will never repeat my family's lifestyle, and never will I take my own life. It means so much to me now, unlike before when life had no meaning.

If I could ever help anyone through this kind of trauma, I would do so. I would dedicate my whole life to helping others. I have God to thank for my survival and my outcome, which is not over yet. God is going to help me soar to my highest.

—Vickie Hargraves

God

I can see God everywhere—in a baby's smile,
in a mother's eye when she cries.
I see Him in a love that never dies.
He's the maker of roses, trees and things.
He writes all love songs.
He's the master of the wind.
He can make the sun shine again.

He makes me feel like I can soar like an eagle to the sky.
He can calm all your storms and make a
troubled sea stand still.
I have a friend who watches over me.
He's the master of all kings.
The greatest love of all.
He's God.

—*Vickie Hargraves*

Morning Song

You are the music in my heart.
My morning song.
You are my moon and stars
When the night is long.
You are my sun
At the break of day.
You are my sculptor:
I am your clay.
You are my laughter
And my tears.
You are my strength
Midst all my fears.
You are my hope
Of a bright new dawn.
You are my dreams
When all else is gone.
You are my sky
When I look above.
But most of all
You are my LOVE.

—Elizabeth K. Pierce

Too Busy

My body may age,
But my mind will stay young.
I have much left to do,
Many songs to be sung.
Many problems to solve,
Many oceans to explore.
Much love to express
For those in distress.

I will spread cheer, love and laughter
As I pass by your way.
The world is my treasure
To have and to hold,
For I am far too busy
To ever grow old.

—Tammy Jesse

List of Honorable Mention Authors

The following authors submitted pieces of writing for this conference and for inclusion in the Beginnings II book. However, because of the limited number of pieces that could be accepted, not everyone was included. Each of these writers deserves praise for taking the chance and allowing us to read his or her work. We hope that each of them will submit writing again next year, when, if possible, we will be able to include more authors in this publication and at the conference.

Ameedah Akbar
Millene Abrudan
Ray Asbury
Cindy Balonier
Bujer Bermcuue
Glenda Brotherton
Rashiid Bryant
Alonzo D. Buckner
Sharon Butcher
Paula Calori
Tracy Camp
Rodrigo Camurca
Destry Cantrell
Nancy Clapper
Marian Clarkston
Amber Clay
Teresa Coil
Gale Coleman
Beverly Conner
Johnny Cook
Edward Cook, Jr.
Tanya Cooper
Barbara Cordell
Jon Cutter
Rodrigo DaSilva
Sally Dillon
C. Edward Doss
Gloria Doughman
Julie Dunlap
Mila Edwards
Randy Estepp
Heather Evans
Ruth Farrell
Melody Faulkner
Rhonda Feasel
Jim Freeborn
Daria Gelsinger
Erica George
Grazia Gianatti
Robin Gladden
Linda Godfrey
Nancy Gregory
Kenneth Groh
Margaret Guy
Ida Herzner
Carrie Hoffman
Silvia Howell
Chad Hudson

Yolanda Humphrey
Jan Jay
Olga Kachouba
Vera L. Kassen
Shannondoah Kasubienski
Kirklynn Kennedy
Adonis Kerns-Woods
Nicki Kiser
Peter Kiss
Maria Kontoveros
Ted Kossokowski
Amy Lee
Carnisha Lee
Olga Levitska
Loftus Lewis
Marcia Lones
Ponda Long
Nhon Luoung
Ruan Luong
Brenda McMillan
Huda Mansour
Edna Martin
Tara Martin
Dennis R. Maxwell
Renate Mueller
Ruth M. Myeress
Leota Meyers
Kathy Mix
Christal Moore
Paula Morgenstern
M. Morrison
Mihailia Munteau
Virginia Naylor
Art Negreta
Tatiana Nouchtaena
Rosemary Nye
Mariko Ogawara
Dragana Ostojin
Shelly Parsley
Jean Phillips
Alex Portnay
Edwina Radeke
Xavier Ransom
Bart Rethmeier
Elena Romanova
Romau
Barb Runyon
Walter Russell
Jenira Samaan
Paul Sarratt
Aicha Scullion
Barbara Schwabauch
Dale Sherman
Jackie Short
Tatyaina Shostak
Shannon Showalter
Jabez Smith
Robert Smith
Sheila Smith
Jennifer Soltys
Crystal Springer
Silvana Srbinoski
Hulamatu Stewart
Wanda Streitenberger
Carrie Styles
Steve Sumner
Theresa Sue Swank
Mike Taylor
Tina Thompson
Carmen Titaru
Beatrice Trent
Sue Tullis
Sandy Bausman Turner
Vesna Vlajic

Gay Walker
Myrtis Walker
Russell Walker
Jamie Walton
David Wardlow
Lawrence C. Wells
Misty White
Louann Wiley
Velma J. Williams
Reginald Willis
Barbie Wineland
Catherine Wong
Socorro Wood
Tammari Yates
Chhary N. Yem

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